

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9738

INFO USINT HAVANA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 9337

DEPT PASS OAU COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS PORG OAU NI

SUBJECT: COMMENT ON OBASANJO'S SPEECH AT THE OAU SUMMIT

REF: (A) STATE 186342; (B) LAGOS 6853 (NOTAL);

(C) LAGOS 6795 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. OBASANJO'S IMPRESSIVE SPEECH AT THE KHARTOUM SUMMIT WAS PARTICULARLY NOTABLE IN THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME A NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE PUBLICLY AND EXPLICITLY WARNED THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA THAT THEY SHOULD BEGIN TO THINK OF DISENGAGING FROM AFRICA IN THE FUTURE. A STATEMENT OF THIS NATURE HAS BEEN STEADILY GERMINATING SINCE THE ATTACK ON KOLWEZI BUT IT CAME OUT MORE BLUNTLY AT LAST THAN ALMOST ANYONE HAD EXPECTED. OBASANJO'S SPEECH WAS A "NON-ALIGNED" AND WELL BALANCED ONE, HOWEVER, WHICH ADMONISHED THE WEST NOT TO REPEAT THE SHABA TYPE OF INTERVENTION AND WARNED AFRICAN LEADERS NOT TO NEGLECT THEIR PEOPLES AND THEREBY INDUCE OUTSIDE INTERVENTION. OBASANJO'S COMMENTS ON RHODESIA REFLECTED IMPATIENCE WITH THE INABILITY OF PATRIOTIC FRONT LEADERS TO
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COOPERATE WITH EACH OTHER AND DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT REGARDING PROSPECTS FOR THE ANGO-AMERICAN PLAN. END SUMMARY.

2. FULL TEXT OF OBASANJO'S SPEECH AT THE RECENT KHARTOUM SUMMIT WAS POUCHED TO AF/W JULY 26 AND WILL ALSO BE SUBMITTED AS AN AIRGRAM. THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS

OF THE SPEECH WERE OF GRRATEST INTEREST FROM OUR STAND-
POINT.

3. AS WE HAVE EARLIER REPORTED (REFTEL B), THE ATTACK ON KOLWEZI AND THE STRONG DISTASTE WHICH THE FMG FELT FOR THE SUBSEQUENT INTRODUCTION OF AN INTER-AFRICAN PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN SHABA WHICH BORE A FRENCH TRADE-MARK CAUSED THE FMG TO EXAMINE MORE CLOSELY THAN EVER BEFORE ITS OWN VIEWS ON THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA. SOME FMG LEADERS WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY KEPT TO THEMSELVES THEIR DOUBTS ABOUT THE LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES NOW REALIZED THAT THEIR TACIT OR EXPLICIT ENDORSEMENT OF CUBAN TROOPS IN AFRICA, IN PARTICULAR, MADE IT EASIER FOR FRENCH TROOPS TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN OTHER PARTS OF AFRICA. THEY ALSO REALIZED THAT IT WAS AWKWARD FOR THEM WITHIN A PROFESSEDLY NON-ALIGNED POLICY TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE THE WESTERN-BACKED INTERVENTION IN SHABA WHILE MAINTAINING A PUBLIC ATTITUDE OF APPROVAL TOWARDS THE PRESENCE OF CUBAN TROOPS IN AFRICA. THEY SOON REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THE SOUNDEST POLICY WOULD BE TO MAKE CLEAR THEIR DISAPPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE OF ALL MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS BY NON-AFRICAN POWERS, WHETHER FROM THE EAST OR THE WEST. GENERAL OBASANJO THEN BEGAN TO MAKE THIS POINT TO VISITING ENVOYS (REFTEL C).
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4. THE NEXT STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY ON THIS ISSUE WAS A POLITE REMARK BY OBASANJO TO VISITING CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER MALMIERCA ON JULY 3, IN THE COURSE OF A DISCUSSION OF CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, ADVISING THAT CUBAN TROOPS NOT OVERSTAY THEIR WELCOME IN ANGOLA. A QUESTION WAS ALSO ASKED WHICH IMPLIED SIMILAR ADVICE WITH REGARD TO CUBAN TROOPS IN ETHIOPIA.

5. NOW, AT THE KHARTOUM SUMMIT, OBASANJO HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY MORE EXPLICIT THAN IN ANY PREVIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING THE NIGERIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS BOTH SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA. DESPITE THE PRAISE IN HIS SPEECH FOR THE CONTRIBUTION WHICH THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS HAD MADE TO AFRICAN LIBERATION, OBASANJO WAS QUITE BLUNT WHEN HE STATED: "TO THE SOVIETS AND THEIR FRIENDS, I SHOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT HAVING BEEN INVITED TO AFRICA IN ORDER TO ASSIST IN THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, THEY SHOULD NOT OVER-STAY THEIR WELCOME. AFRICA IS NOT ABOUT TO THROW OFF ONE COLONIAL YOKE FOR ANOTHER. RATHER THEY SHOULD HASTEN

THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY CAPABILITY OF
THEIR AFRICAN FRIENDS TO STAND ON THEIR OWN...WE NEED
IN AFRICA MASSIVE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO MAKE UP FOR
THE LOST GROUND OF THE COLONIAL ERA AND NOT MILITARY
HARDWARE FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION AND STERILE IDEOLOGICAL
SLOGANS WHICH HAVE NO RELEVANCE TO OUR AFRICAN SOCIETY...

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THE SOVIETS SHOULD THEREFORE SEE IT TO BE IN THEIR
INTERESTS NOT TO SEEK TO PERPETUALLY MAINTAIN THEIR
PRESENCE IN AFRICA EVEN AFTER THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH
THEY WERE INVITED HAS BEEN ACHIEVED. THIS WAY, THEY
RUN THE RISK OF BEING DUBBED A NEW IMPERIAL POWER AS
INDEED THEY ALREADY ARE BEING CALLED EVEN BY THOSE WITH
WHOM THEY HAVE HAD LONG ASSOCIATION. LET THE SOVIETS
AND THEIR COLLABORATORS HEED THIS TIMELY COUNSEL." TO
THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS IS STRONGER LANGUAGE
THAN A NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE HAS EVER USED IN PUBLIC
COMMENTS CONCERNING THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA.

6. IT WAS NATURAL IN TERMS OF BOTH THE FMG'S NON-
ALIGNED POLICY AND ITS DISPLEASURE OVER WESTERN HANDLING
OF THE SHABA INCIDENT THAT OBASANJO ALSO LECTURED
THE WEST. IT HAS BEEN EVIDENT ALL ALONG THAT NOTHING
GALLED THE FMG AS MUCH ABOUT THE INTERVENTION IN SHABA
AS THE FACT THAT IT HAD BEEN WORKED OUT IN PARIS, AND SO
THE FORCEFUL CONCLUSION OF THIS PARAGRAPH WAS THE
FOLLOWING: "WE TOTALLY REJECT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF
NEO-COLONIALISM ANY COLLECTIVE SECURITY SCHEME FOR

AFRICA FASHIONED AND TELEGUIDED FROM OUTSIDE AFRICA
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FOR THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL OR MILITARY INTEREST OF
ANY SUPER POWER BLOC. IT IS AN INSULT TO THE DIGNITY
AND INTELLECT OF THE AFRICAN MAN."

7. THE SPEECH WAS A WELL BALANCED ONE IN THAT OBASANJO ALSO
POINTED OUT THAT AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS THEMSELVES BEAR MUCH OF
THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INTERVENTIONS OF OUTSIDE POWERS.
THE CORE OF HIS ARGUMENT HERE WAS THE FOLLOWING: "FOR AS
LONG AS WE NEGLECT THE TRUE INTERESTS OF THE GENERALITY
OF OUR PEOPLES, SO LONG WILL OTHER POWERS FIND IT EASY
TO INTERFERE IN OUR INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND DIVIDE OUR
PEOPLES. THERE IS NO BETTER DEFENSE AGAINST EXTERNAL
FORCES THAN THE GOVERNMENT WHICH ENDEAVORS TO
CARRY THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION ALONG WITH IT
AND TREATS ITS PEOPLE FAIRLY AND DECENTLY." THE VIEWS
OF FMG LEADERS REGARDING MOBUTU'S PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY
FOR ZAIRE'S PROBLEMS OBVIOUSLY INFLUENCED THIS PART OF
THE SPEECH.

8. THE FMG HAS LONG BEEN IRRITATED BY THE UNWILLINGNESS
OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT LEADERS TO WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH
EACH OTHER. HERE AGAIN, HOWEVER, OBASANJO'S REMARKS
ON THIS SUBJECT ARE IN OUR OPINION THE STRONGEST HE
HAS USED IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT: "WE IN RETURN DEMAND
FROM THE PATRIOTIC FRONT THEIR RECIPROCAL DUTY TO
SPEEDILY COMPLETE THE PROCESS OF BRINGING THEIR POLITICAL
AND MILITARY FORCES UNDER A UNIFIED COMMAND. AND NOW
THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SPEEDY LIBERATION OF
ZIMBABWE DEVOLVES PRIMARILY ON THEM, WE HOPE THAT THE
PATRIOTIC FRONT, IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR DECISION IN
LIBREVILLE LAST YEAR, WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP THE DOORS
OPEN TO OTHER NATIONALISTS WILLING TO BE ENGAGED IN THE
ARMED STRUGGLE TO FREE ZIMBABWE AND WHO MAY WISH TO JOIN
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FORCES WITH THEM. IT IS THROUGH SUCH CONCILIATORY
POSTURES THAT THE BLOODY CIVIL WAR WHICH WE ALL DREAD
MIGHT FOLLOW IN THE WAKE OF INDEPENDENCE CAN BE AVERTED.
IT IS ALSO THROUGH SUCH POSTURES THAT OUTSIDE MILITARY
INTERVENTION CAN BE AVOIDED IN AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE."

9. IN HIS REMARKS ON RHODESIA, OBASANJO, ALSO
REFLECTED A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE SKEPTICISM OF

THE FMG IN RECENT WEEKS REGARDING THE PROSPECTS FOR
MOVING TOWARDS REALIZATION OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN
BY CONVENING AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE. HIS REMARKS
INDICATED THAT THE FMG HAS BEEN MOVING BACK TOWARDS ITS
EARLIER VIEW THAT NO REAL PROGRESS CAN BE MADE ON
RHODESIA UNTIL SMITH HAS BEEN REMOVED: "FOR THIS
REASON WE PARTICULARLY WELCOMED THE ANGLO-AMERICAN
PROPOSALS. HOWEVER THESE PROPOSALS NOW APPEAR TO HAVE
BEEN LARGELY OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS AND WE HOPE IT IS
CLEAR TO ALL THAT NO NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ACCEPTABLE
TO ALL THE PARTIES IN ZIMBABWE CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT
FIRST REMOVING SMITH, WHO IS THE MAJOR IMPEDIMENT TOWARDS
THIS END, AND WITHOUT SETTING ASIDE THE UNACCEPTABLE
PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT."
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